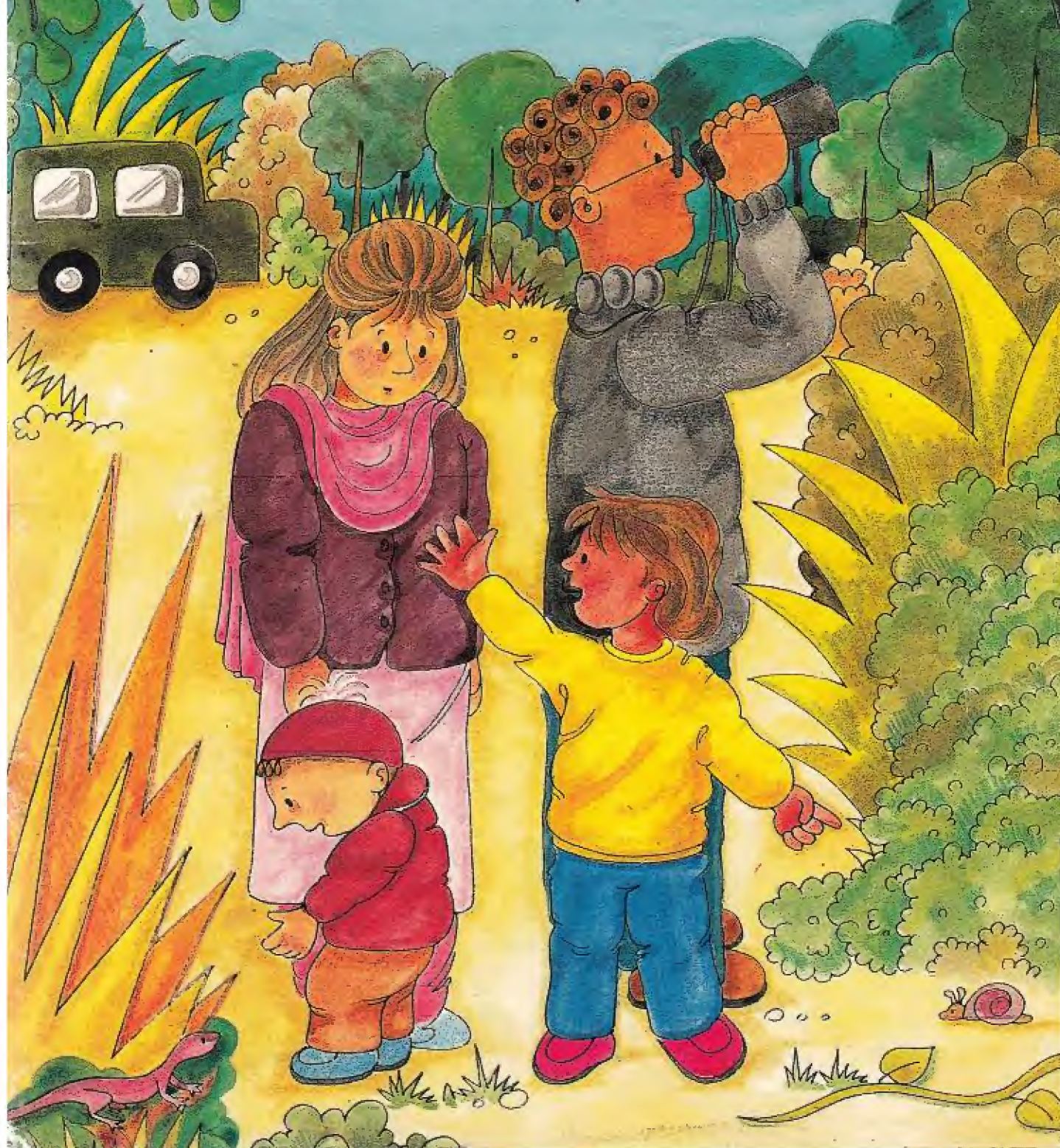


My Jungle Adventure

A child's discovery of Indian Wildlife



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My Jungle Adventure

A child's discovery of Indian Wildlife

You are proud to be Indian in so many ways.

Now, here's a glimpse into our country's natural beauty
and jungle wildlife which we must fight to keep safe.

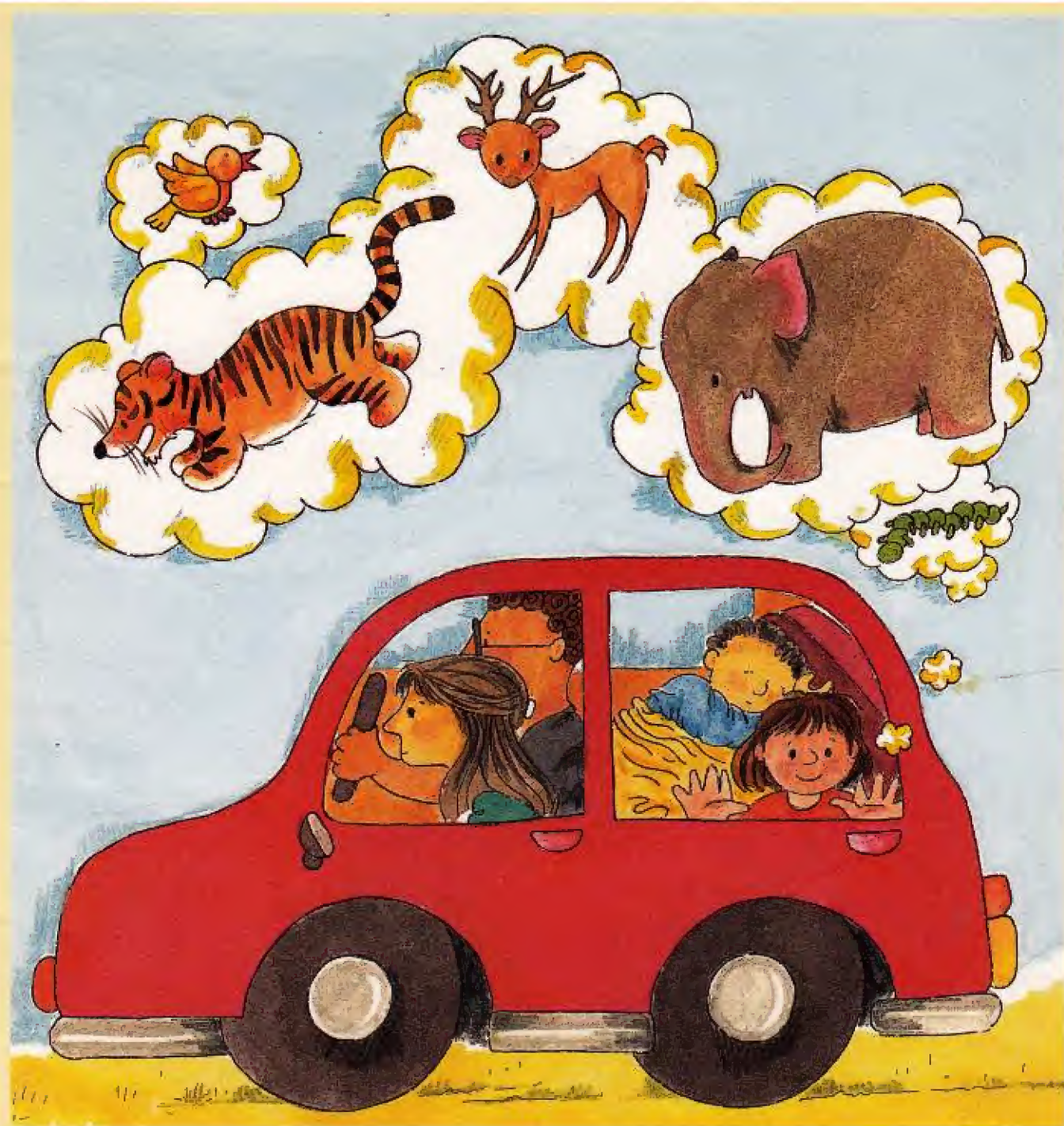
Come, follow young Manjula and Manoj

on their family safari through Corbett Park

--- and share the wonder and excitement

of all the sights and smells in that green forest haven.





Manjula stretched lazily in the car, tired but happy. Her little brother Manoj and she had set off on a holiday with their parents — a weekend in beautiful Nainital in the state of Uttar Pradesh. There, at the foothills of the Himalayas, they would explore Corbett: India's oldest national park.

She kept dreaming wistfully of the amazing animals and birds they could soon see...

Leaving Delhi behind, they were ready to reach Corbett. Only three years old, Manoj slept for most of the trip but Manjula tried to be wide awake. I'm older, she thought, proud of her own eight years. Looking out with big brown eyes, she pressed her nose to the window.

Their parents told Manjula and Manoj that:

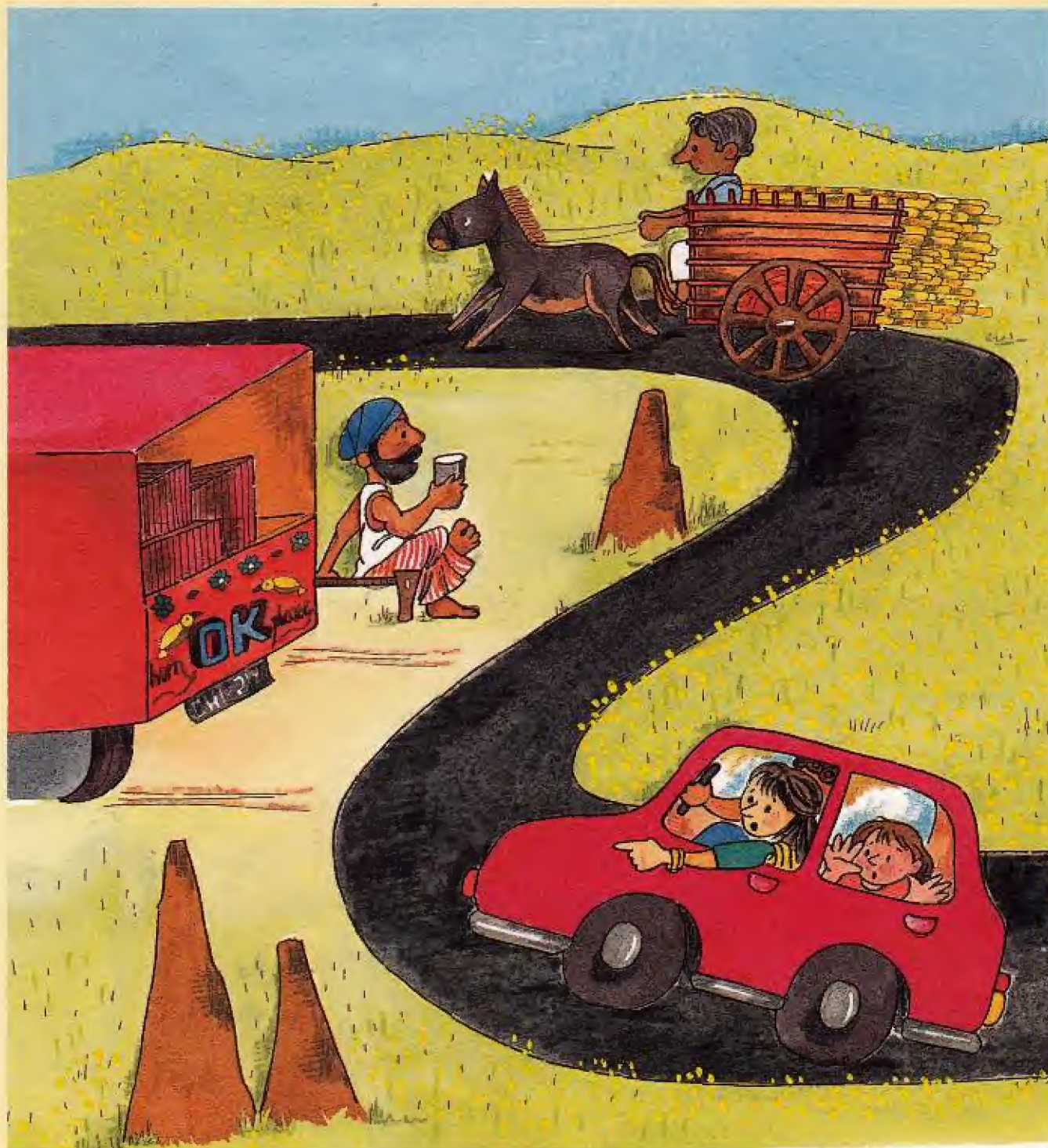


*Silence is the golden rule of the jungle.
Animals or birds are bound to hide
or run away from noisy human beings.*

*Once in the forest, never get out
of your jeep. Have a safe safari.*

*Most animals will not attack unless
they are provoked,
either hunted or teased.*





The air smelt fresh and nice. It was cold that February afternoon. Truck drivers stopped at roadside dhabas to rest, eat hot potato parathas and drink fresh lassi. Small pony carts trotted by, carrying sugarcane. Pretty yellow meadows filled with mustard grew all around.

They were entering Corbett.

Just then, they saw something like a rather strange-looking broken tree trunk. First one, then some more. "They're termite hills!" exclaimed their father excitedly.

Their father explained to Manjula and Manoj that:



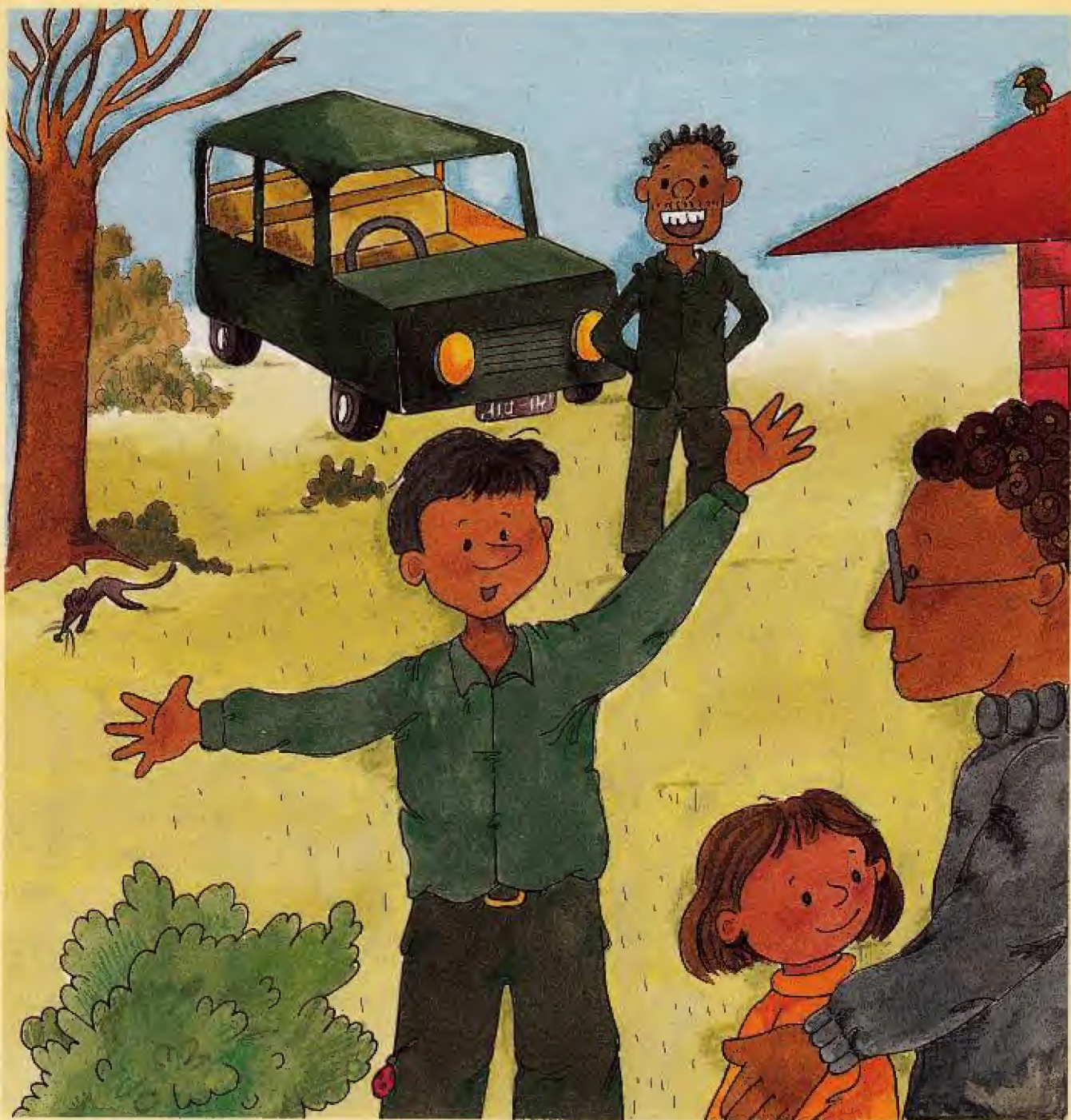
The animal every visitor to a wildlife sanctuary wants, even craves, to see is the tiger. With very few tigers left roaming free, these beautiful animals are in danger of becoming extinct — disappearing from the face of the earth.

The park they were going to was named after Major Jim Corbett, the famous hunter and conservationist who has written exciting books about his jungle experiences.



Major Jim Corbett

This park is home to over 50 kinds of mammals, 25 reptile species and 580 types of birds. With so many different animals and birds found at Corbett, it is called 'land of the trumpet, roar and song'.



As they drove into the hotel gate, Manjula clapped her hands —
"Here we are, finally!"

After showering, they packed water bottles and binoculars. A jeep with a friendly driver waited outside. "Welcome to Corbett, I'm Harpal Singh," he said. "With me is Dayaram, our forest guide."

Not long after, they heard a barking sound.

"A dog?" Manjula asked Dayaram.

He shook his head, remarking, "A barking deer. There it is."

"Barking deer? A deer which barks? How can that be — only dogs bark!" piped up little Manoj, looking a bit vexed. Manjula threw him a superior look that plainly said, "Oh grow up, kid."

Dayaram the forest guide told Manjula and Manoj that:



Sambar

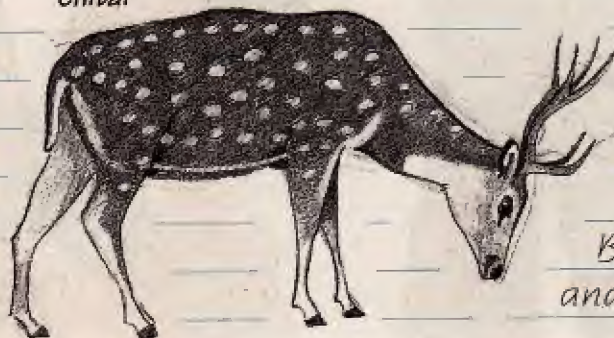


The four main kinds of deer at India's national parks are barking deer, spotted deer (or chital), sambar and hog deer.

Barking Deer



Chital

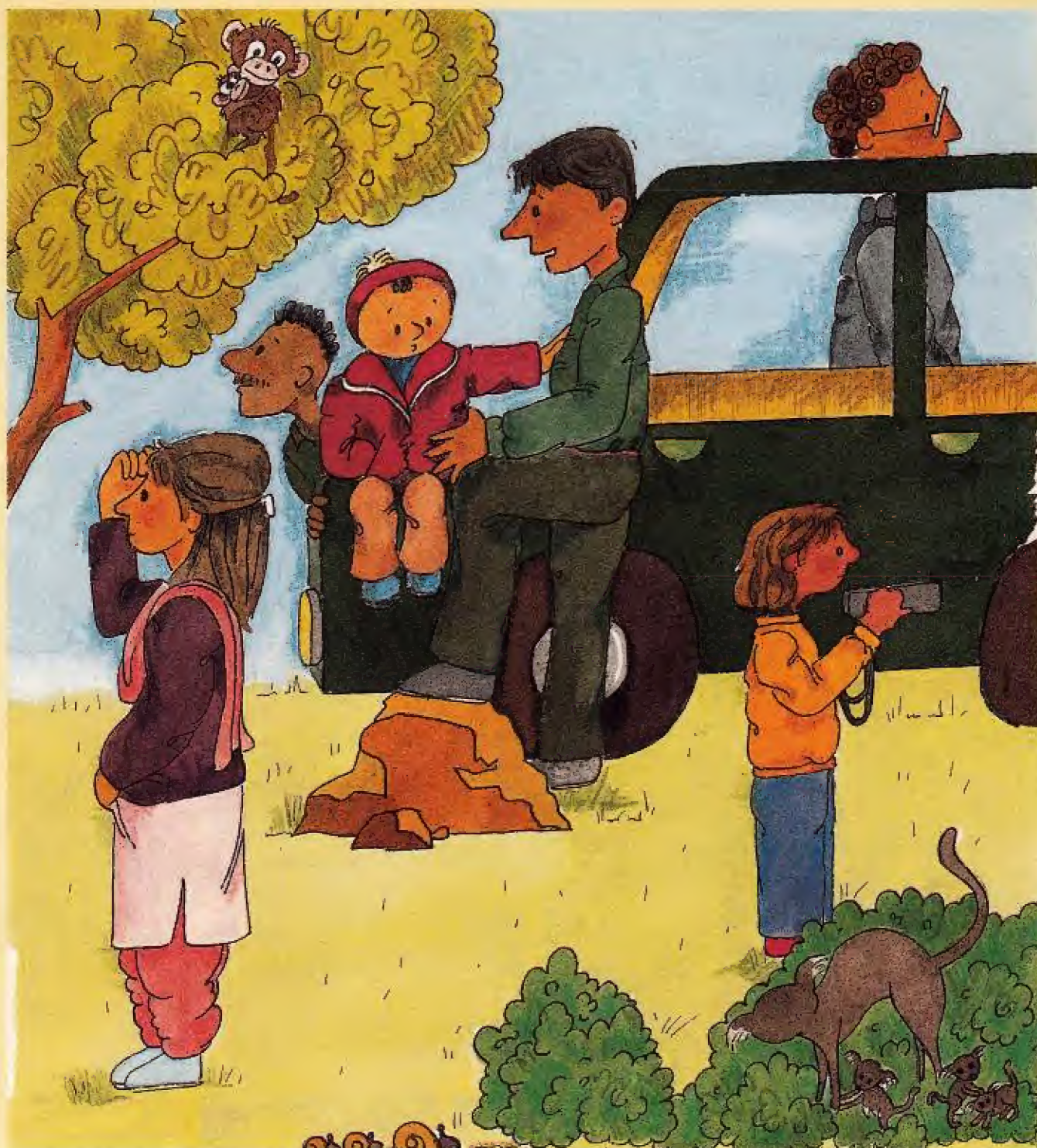


When a tiger is seen prowling, all animals let out loud cries of alert. But it is the sounds of the sambar and langur monkey that are the best signals to follow.

Chital and langur depend on each other. The langur eat fruit from trees — what falls down is for the chital to eat. As langur are high in the trees, they can spy a tiger crouching low and call a warning to the chital. And since the chital has sharp ears, it hears the tiger better and alerts its langur friends.

Hog Deer





"I wish we see animal babies. Everybody loves babies," Manoj — who had seen a weaver bird nest from his hotel room window — said some time later.

"That won't be easy," remarked Harpal Singh. "Animals can't trust us humans. The cubs' mother is fiercely protective of her babies. If we go close to her family, she feels threatened."

"He wants to look at babies because he is one himself," Manjula offered in explanation. "But don't you worry, we're all here together. There is nothing to be afraid of," she said, trying to sound kind.

Harpal Singh the jeep driver told Manjula and Manoj that:



If a baby bird has fallen out of its nest, it should be left alone. Bird babies, called fledgelings, often fall to the forest floor while learning to fly. Once down, they can try flapping their wings and hopping about.



Hare, not rabbit, babies are found in India. They huddle in a burrow lovingly made by their mother — a shallow nest in the ground lined with the softest grass. The grass and mother's fur keep newborn babies warm.

Apes are among the higher evolved animals. Baby apes take long to grow up because the better the brain an animal has, the longer the time of its youth.



There was a rustling in the leaves. Out, from behind a sal tree, stepped two sambar deer.

"Notice those antlers?" Dayaram asked. "The male sambar sprouts them on his head. Don't they look as if they're bunches of branches planted there?"

Manjula nodded, but young Manoj burst out laughing. "Sambar, sambar! Sambar is only what I have with my breakfast idlis."

"Please, someone tell him to stop talking nonsense," begged Manjula.

The sun was properly out now, taking off some of the morning chill.

"Come on, it would be nice to see some birds now," Manjula remarked.

"That may be tomorrow when we ride Chanchal the elephant," said Dayaram. "She walks taller than this jeep, so on her we could well sight birds in the greenery above."

Dayaram the forest guide told Manjula and Manoj that:

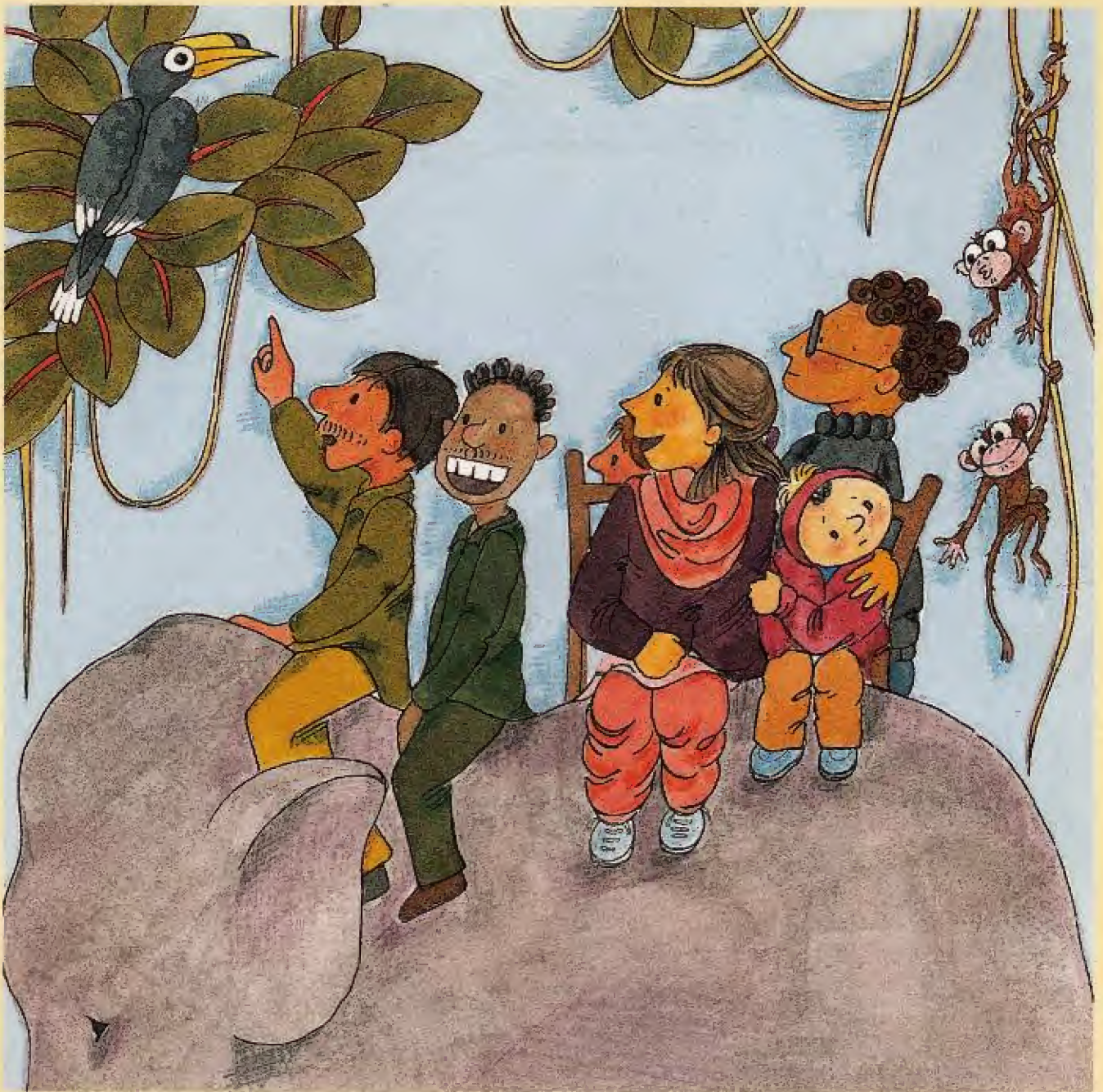


Just like man,
elephants can live up to
80-100 years.
An elephant's infancy,
childhood, teenage,
adulthood and old age
match that of a human being.



Elephants are blessed with a long memory. When a tusker once returned to its stall after four years in the forest (where it had run away to), it had not forgotten a single one of the 40 command words learnt earlier.

The elephant needs the most food in the jungle. It eats over 200 kilos and drinks 90 litres of water daily. So, felling forests means starving the elephant.



After lunch the next afternoon, they all climbed, thrilled, onto the wide back of Chanchal the elephant. The mahout riding her was Faisal.

"Wow, wait till my friends hear about this ride! There'll be such excitement, I'm sure they won't believe me," said Manjula.

It was a whole new feeling, swaying this way and that as Chanchal ambled. She was able to plod through thick tree clusters they could not have crossed by jeep. Manoj held tight to his mother's sleeve as a langur family screeched and chattered close to his ear!

Then something came down near them with a swoop and a swoosh.

Pointing quietly to a branch on which a large bird sat perched, Faisal moved his lips to softly say, "A hornbill."

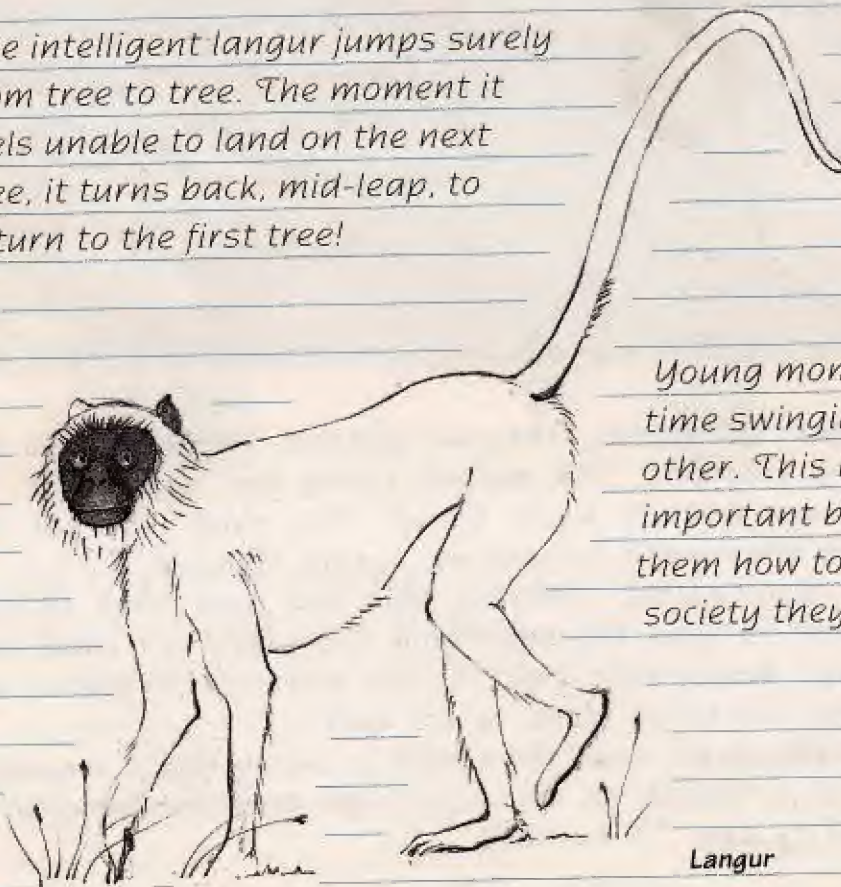
Faisal the mahout told Manjula and Manoj that:



Hoolock Gibbon

The langur, from the primate group of animals, is a clever monkey like the ape. The only ape found in India is the Hoolock, or white-browed, gibbon.

The intelligent langur jumps surely from tree to tree. The moment it feels unable to land on the next tree, it turns back, mid-leap, to return to the first tree!



Young monkeys spend a lot of time swinging and chasing each other. This is not just play. It is important because it teaches them how to survive in the jungle society they have to live in.

Langur



The giant hornbill with its curved yellow beak swiftly flew off ... But what was that noisy bird now?

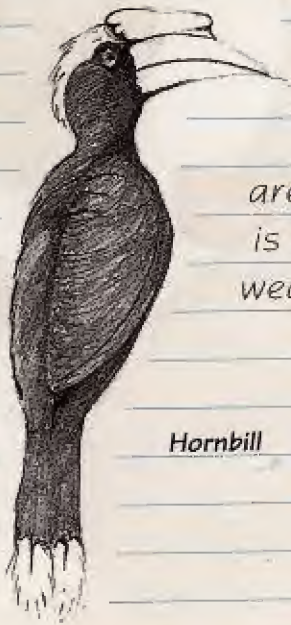
A flutter-flutter sound repeated itself. Then came a kind of chirping and hop-hopping sound.

Seeing the children's puzzled faces, their mother said, "It could be a jungle babbler calling loudly to the others."

"Lucky thing, its parents are not saying 'Shh-Shh' to keep quiet all the time. Whispering is hard to do!" complained Manoj.

"Please, please," Manjula begged. "Let's ready the binoculars for a few more birds."

Their mother told Manjula and Manoj that:



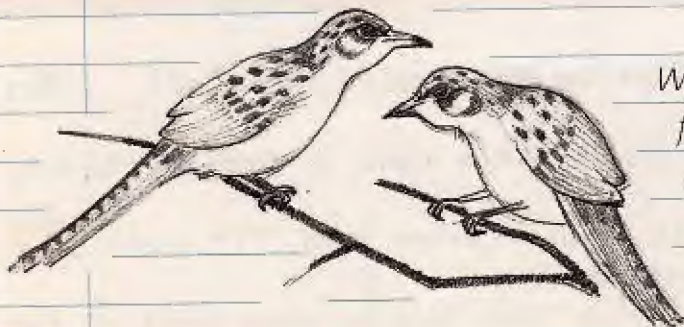
Hornbill

The hornbill has a black back and a white neck. Its outer feathers are white, tipped with black. This pattern is the favourite of some tribesmen who wear these plumes.



Eagle

The eagle has some of the sharpest claws and eyes in the bird kingdom. The strong claws, or talons, help hunting. Its eyes can see the farthest – which is why a person with very good sight is called eagle-eyed.



Babblers

While the jungle babbler lives in the forest, its cousin the common babbler is around human homes. They too noisily babble and talk. Moving together in groups of six or seven, they are nicknamed 'the seven sisters'.



It was getting a bit dark.

"No one is allowed to stay in the wildlife park after 6 p.m.," Dayaram announced. "The jungle needs peace and can get quite dangerous at dusk, so we must leave before the light fades."

"I've read that owls and bats are called nocturnal creatures because they fly at night," Manjula said.

"That's right," Dayaram smiled. "Oh, do you see that kingfisher diving to the edge of the pool there?"

At the same moment a pretty bird with a red crest and pointed bill was scratching at a tree. "Woodpecker!" Faisal almost shouted, excitedly.

Harpal Singh the jeep driver told Manjula and Manoj that:



Scops Owl

With eyes round as saucers, the owl flies silently through the night to hunt for food. Eating mice, rats, small animals, fish and crabs, this bird has such a serious face that it is called 'the wise old owl'.

A woodpecker searching a meal peck-pecks at the bark of a tree. When a hole is made, it puts in a sticky tongue to eat grubs and insects living inside. It is fond of black ants.



Woodpecker

Kingfisher



The kingfisher gets its name from its skill at plunging into water exactly when it is sure to catch a fish. Its needle-like beak is red in colour and its body is bright blue-green.



The sky was turning greyer, but they were almost out of the forest. Insect voices filled the air. A cricket began chirping and — could those be frogs croaking?

"Will a snake jump at us, it's g-g-getting dark!" wailed Manoj, frightened.

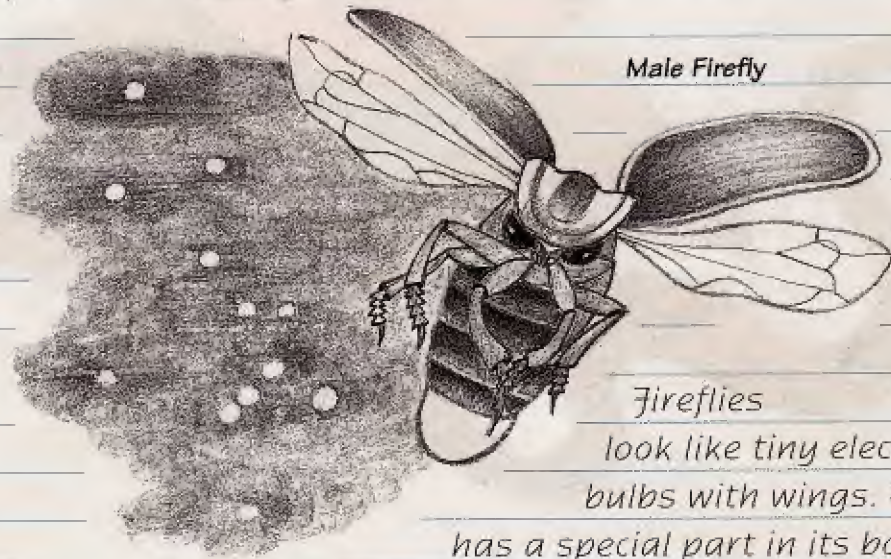
"Don't worry," comforted Dayaram kindly. "Many reptiles are harmless. Small snakes eat eggs, worms and rats. Bigger ones capture pigs, goats and deer. Snakes that could harm people are the cobra, copperhead and rattlesnake. But if you are careful, you are safe in the jungle because snakes too are scared of humans and move away."

Dayaram the forest guide told Manjula and Manoj that:



Python

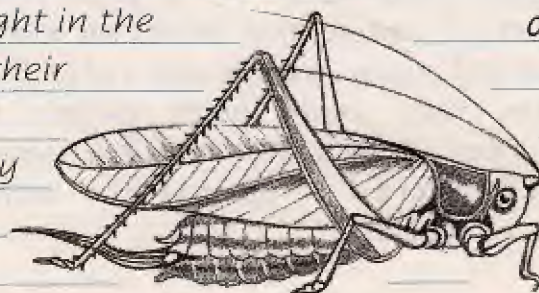
Whether it is day or night,
snakes cannot see or hear too well,
but have a strong sense of smell.
They pick up smells with their tongues!



Male Firefly

Fireflies
look like tiny electric
bulbs with wings. Each
has a special part in its body
that lights up when it breathes in.

Crickets make music at night in the
funniest way — scraping their
leathery front wings
together. You may actually
hear some chirping a
mile away.



Cricket

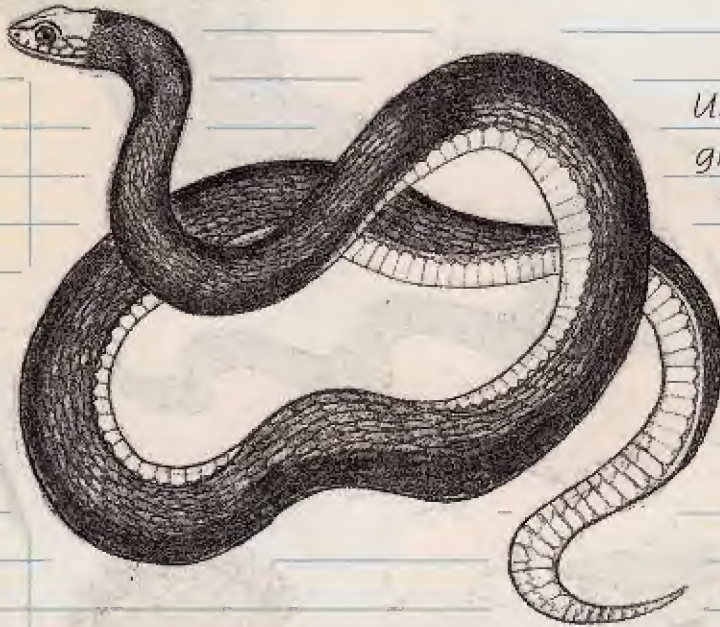


"Ugh, this snake talk is creepy," Manjula murmured, shivering.

"But reptiles are useful in many ways, eating mice and other pests..." her father began to explain. "And they are eaten by other hungry animals. Our world would not be the same without these slinky, scaly snakes."

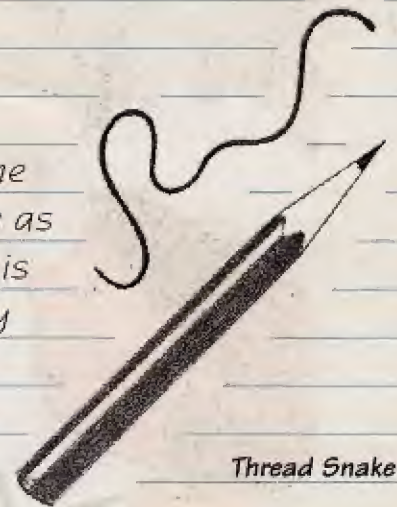
"Yes," nodded Dayaram. "Do you know that if people are bitten, snakes can even help — medicine is made from their poison to treat snake bites."

Their father told Manjula and Manoj that:

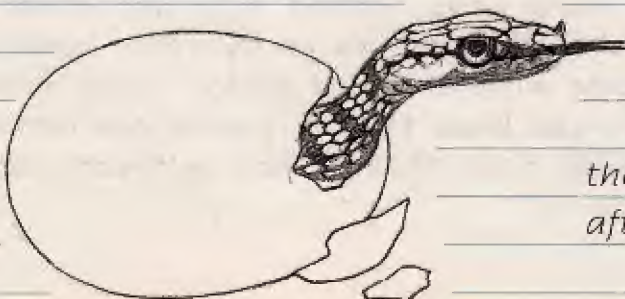


Unlike people, snakes never stop growing. But it's not hard to outrun a snake. The fastest only slithers along at the same speed as you walk.

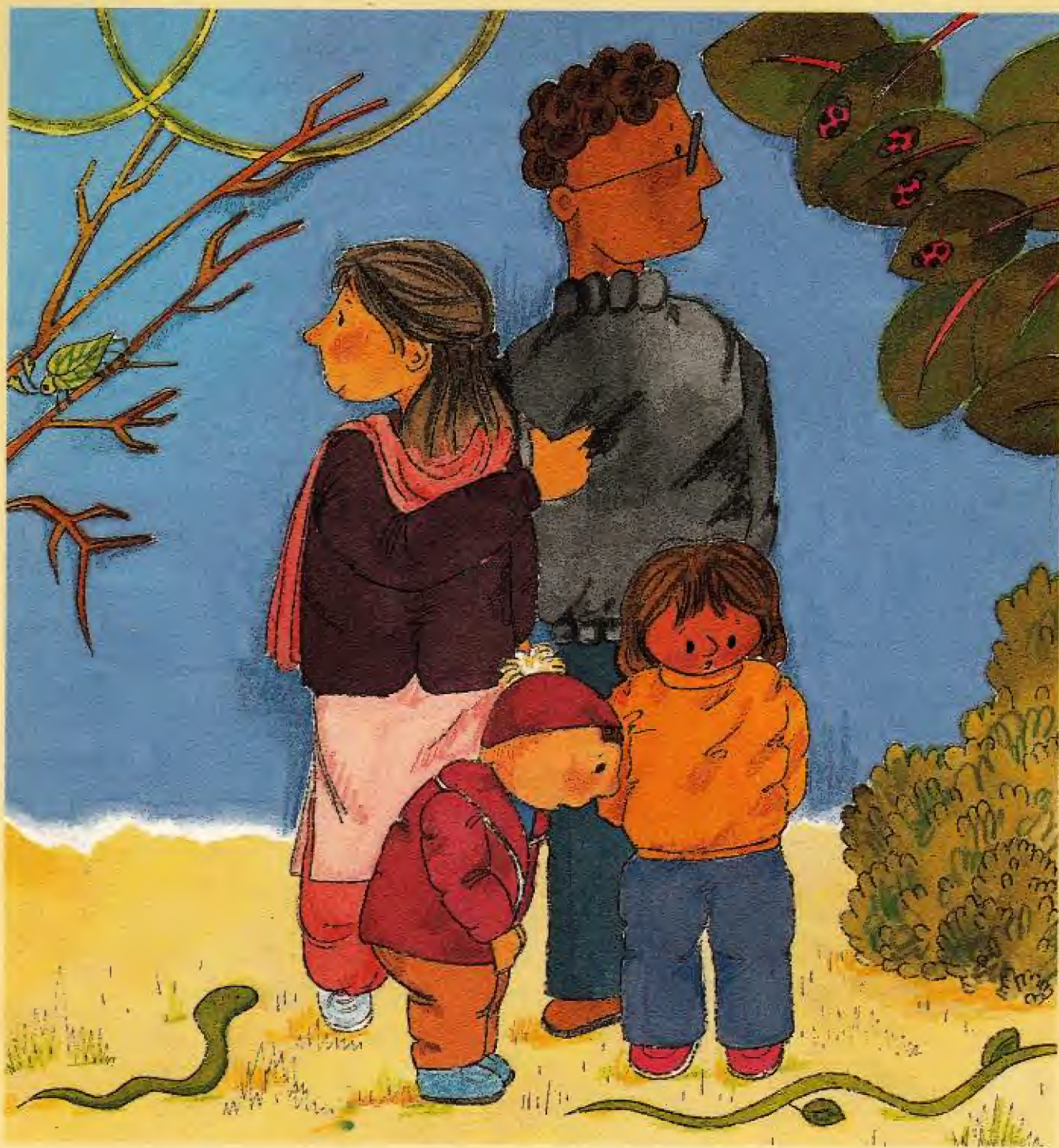
The world's heaviest snake is the anaconda: it can weigh as much as three grown men. The smallest is the thread snake: it is as skinny as the lead in a pencil.



Thread Snake



Baby snakes have a tooth to help them break their eggs. It falls off soon after they hatch!



"Besides," added Faisal, "snakes cleverly hide from enemies."

"I know the word for that," Manjula offered. "It's long and difficult. Cam- something ... como ... yes, camouflage!"

"The vine snake makes itself look like a vine hanging from a tree," Faisal continued. "This is called mimicry."

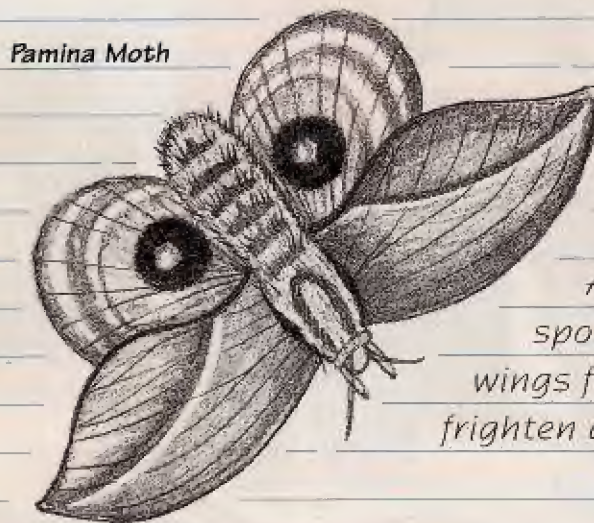
"Most jungle creatures use tricks to protect themselves," put in Dayaram. "The smallest ladybug pretends to be dead if she is afraid. She squirts a hot yellow liquid from her leg joint, which makes her attacker run away."

Faisal the mahout told Manjula and Manoj that:



Skunk

When faced with danger, the skunk is famous for throwing a smelly spray in the face of an enemy like the bobcat. This really bad odour can last for days.

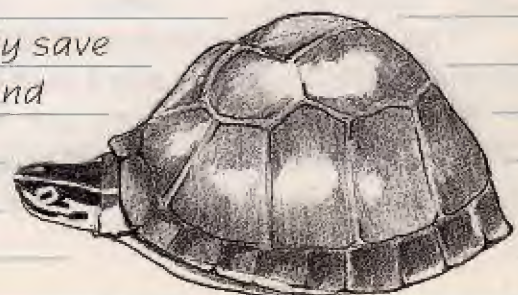


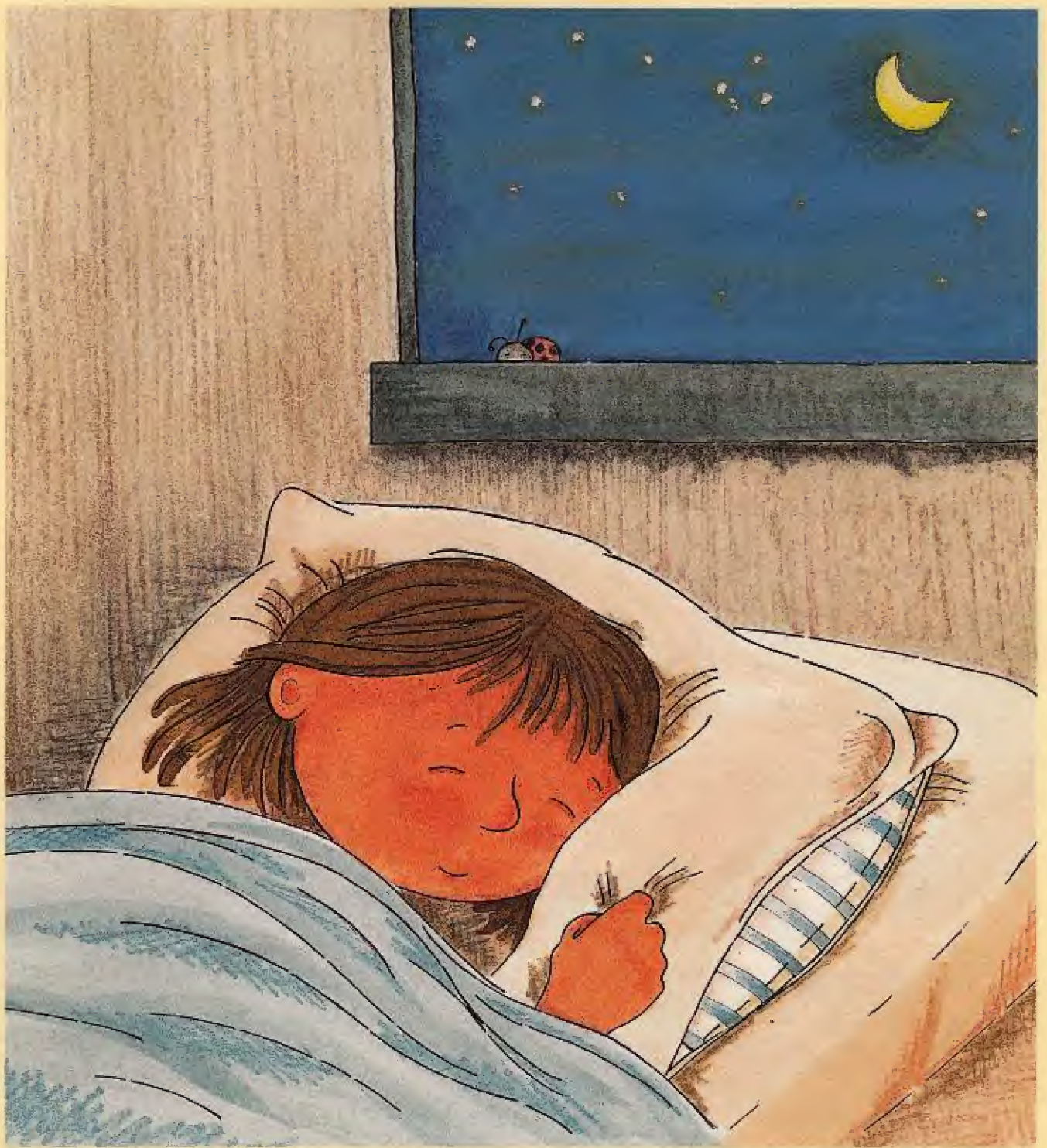
Pamina Moth

A type of moth has two big 'eye' spots on its hind wings. When these wings flutter open, the false eyes easily frighten away a preying bird.

Box Turtle

The slow box turtle is able to smartly save itself from harm — by pulling legs and head into its shell and closing up tight. Even a powerful attacker can do nothing about that!





Back at the hotel at last, Manjula realised how sleepy she was. Manoj had already shut his eyes.

Outside it was so still and dark, she thought it was as if a wizard had spread his black cape over everything.

What a wonderful world ...

... Tomorrow would be another day to look forward to. What surprises did the forest hold for them? How many creatures might freshly show themselves? Would they spot a tiger?

She drifted off to sleep.

Manjula remembered reading in their wildlife guide book that:



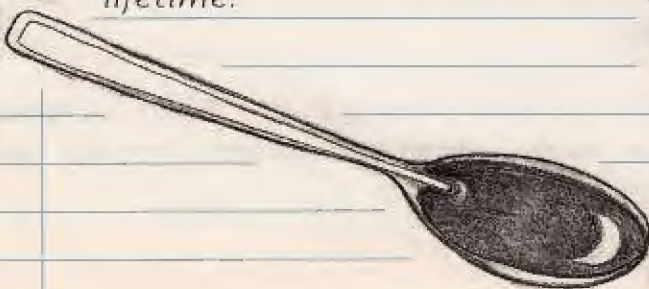
Ants rush around collecting food to store when they feel a storm is on the way. They are sensitive to changes in air pressure that warn them about this.

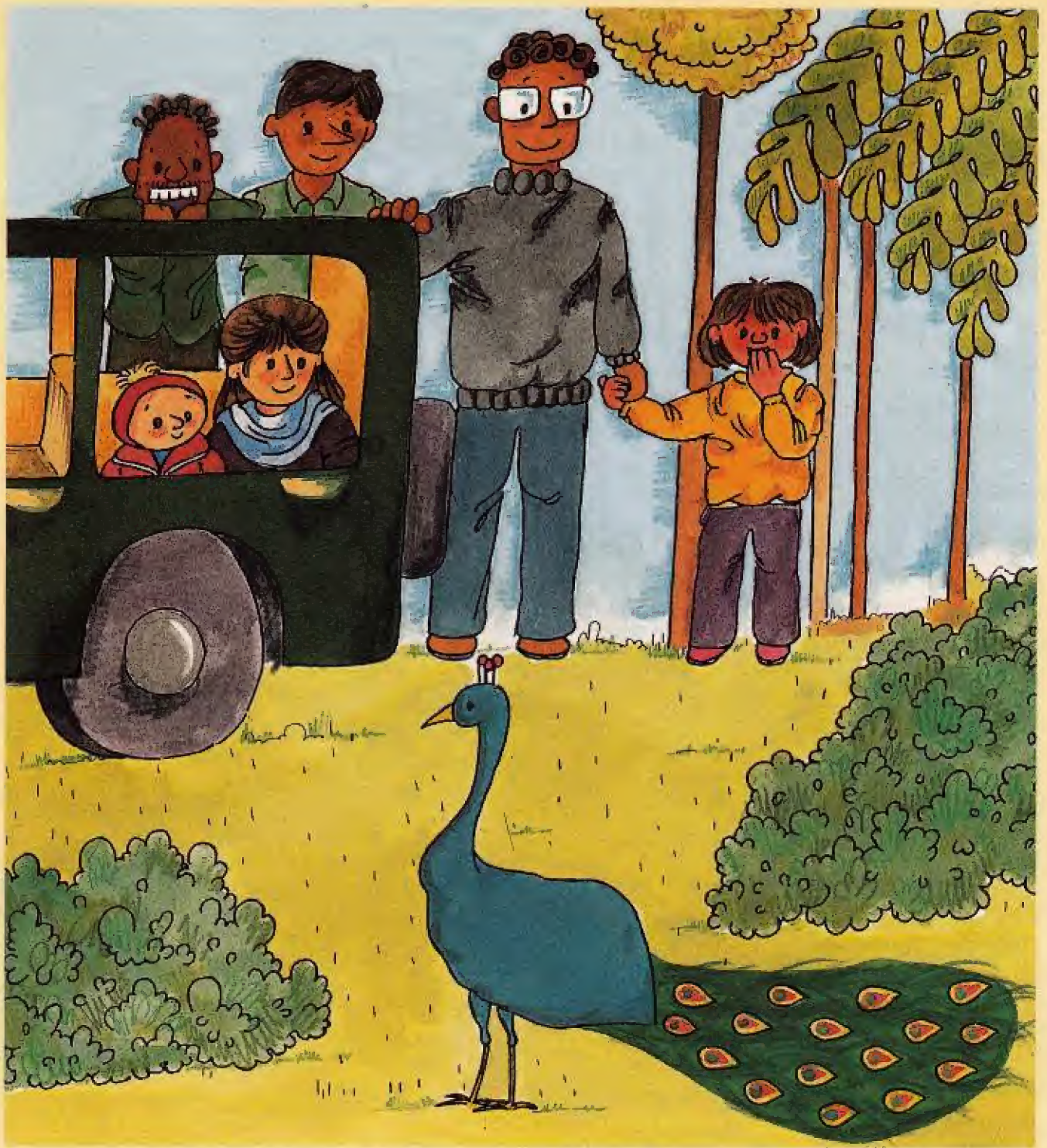
Chinkaras don't need to drink water. They get all the moisture they need from the leaves they eat.



Chinkara

Honeybees keep buzzing busily, but get small results from so much activity. Each bee is able to make only one teaspoonful of honey in its lifetime!





Morning dawned before she knew it. Throwing on their sweaters they were off again.

"We have to spot a tiger today," Manjula insisted as the jeep hummed along the jungle paths. "How can we go back home without seeing the tiger in Corbett?"

Suddenly, the air was rent by a shrill cry. They held their breath. And then they saw a beautiful sight. A peacock about to fan out his tail.

"Our national bird! Do you think he will dance for us too?" Dayaram wondered.

Dayaram the forest guide told Manjula and Manoj that:



When a peacock's open tail spreads behind his head, it can be almost four feet long. Its green feathers have lovely blue 'eyes' with a brownish border around them. Not only are peacocks hunted for feathers, but fewer live today also because selling these birds fetches their owners a lot of money.



The best months to spot a peacock are in winter between November and February. The time to see him is early morning or late evening, because this is when the colourful feathers reflect the light best — and when he comes out to charm the peahen!

It is said that peacocks can sense rain. Knowing this, they look up to see the first rain clouds and begin to dance. Some people keep peacocks as pets. This is sad because all birds and animals look and feel best free, out in the wild where they really belong.



To Manjula's delight, that was precisely what the peacock began to do. As he started slowly swaying from side to side, her father teased, "See how good-looking he is. The poor peahen has no such colourful tail!"

"That bird is simply showing off," his wife laughed.

"Even the lion only looks great with his mane," Manjula said. "He makes his lioness do the work of hunting for food. The tigress does the same thing for her family."

Their mother told Manjula and Manoj that:



Male birds and animals usually have brighter colouring, because they must mate — attract females to build a home and have babies with them. The peacock and peahen are an example of this.

Weaver Bird nest



Drake



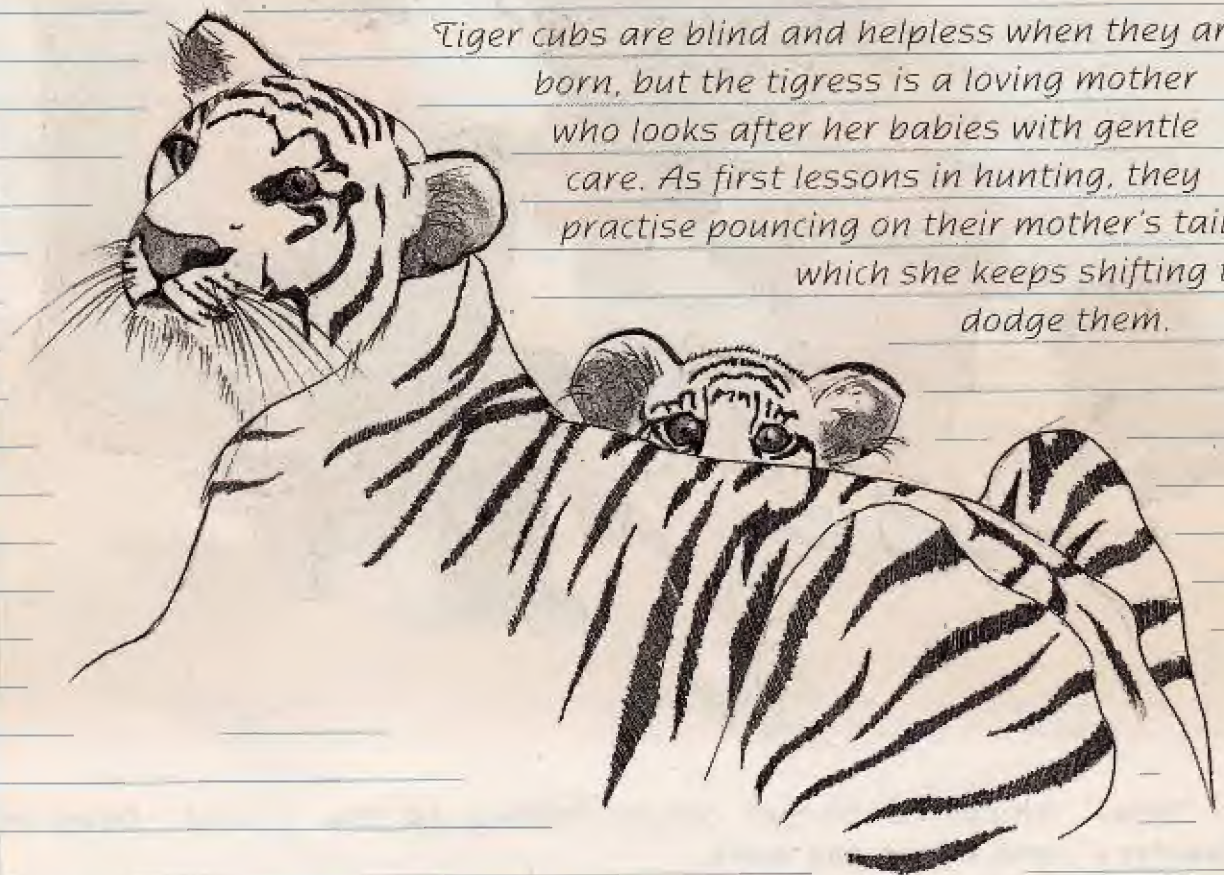
The weaver bird has many 'wives' and builds a cluster of nests together. As soon as one nest is completed, the female goes into it to lay her eggs.

Male ducks, or drakes, grow a new set of feathers around the middle of each year, to prepare for mating.

Harpal Singh the jeep driver told Manjula and Manoj that:



The tiger is a private animal
leading a lonely life.
He chooses a quiet, hidden spot
in tall forest grass for a den.
Here he is least likely to be disturbed.



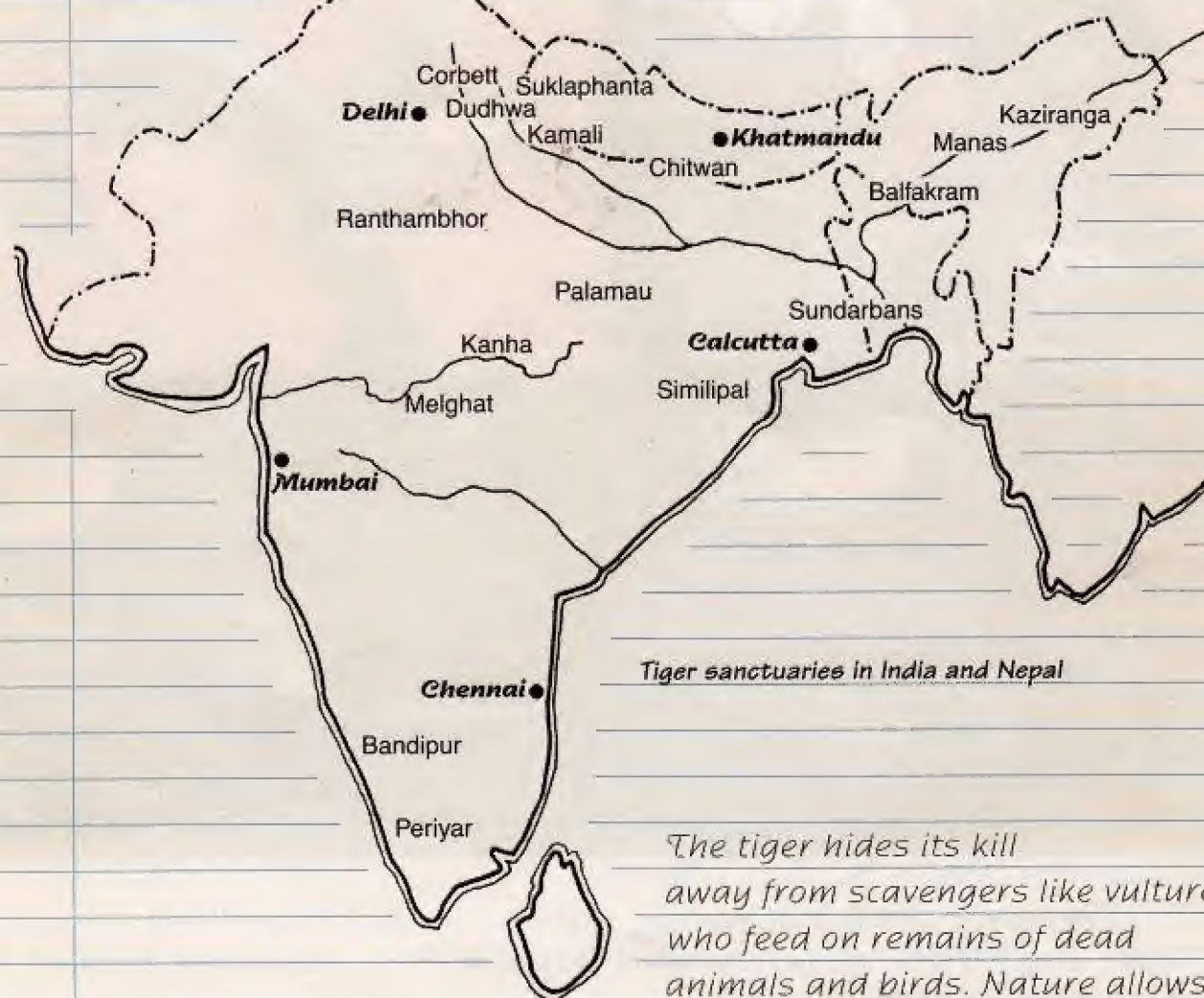
Tiger cubs are blind and helpless when they are
born, but the tigress is a loving mother
who looks after her babies with gentle
care. As first lessons in hunting, they
practise pouncing on their mother's tail,
which she keeps shifting to
dodge them.

Each tiger has a unique pattern of
stripes and facial markings that is its
alone. This helps experts studying
feline habits in the forest to identify
different tigers.



Dayaram the forest guide told Manjula and Manoj that:

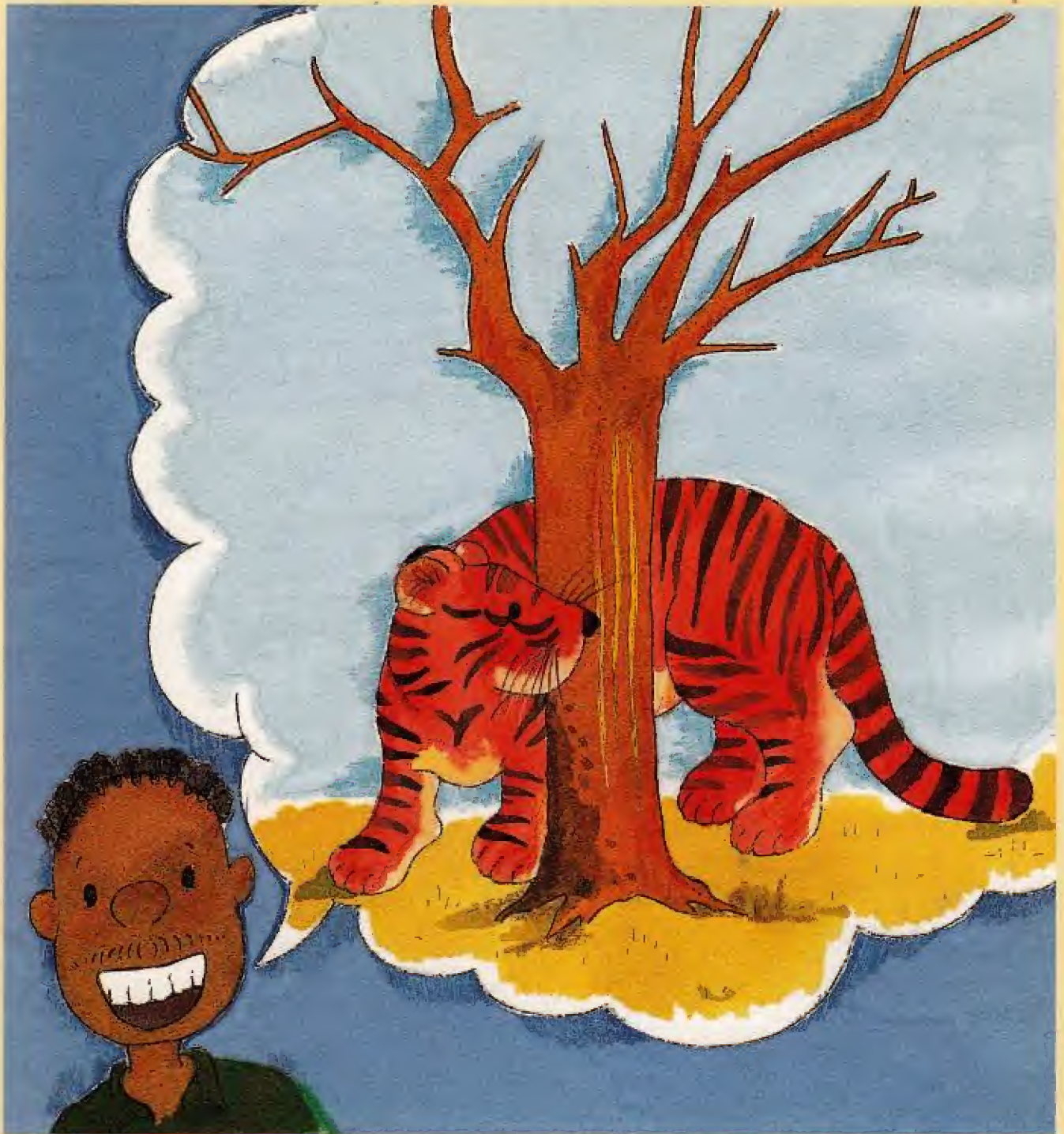
The tiger is a truly Asian animal. The eight major species are Indian, Chinese, Indonesian, Sumatran, Javan and Siberian (the last two, Caspian and Balinese, may already be extinct).



Tiger sanctuaries in India and Nepal

Total protection of the forests themselves is the best way to protect the tiger, so Project Tiger was launched in 1973.

The tiger hides its kill away from scavengers like vultures, who feed on remains of dead animals and birds. Nature allows no wastage – vultures, hyenas, jackals, bugs and beetles finish eating clean anything left by their forest friends.



"And whatever is this?" Harpal Singh asked Dayaram, showing him a dark patch on the low branch of a rohini tree.

"That's our tiger telling us this is his area alone," the guide answered. "Tigers mark their territory spraying such scent with their urine. Or they scrape claws down tree trunks. Other animals obey these signs and retreat."

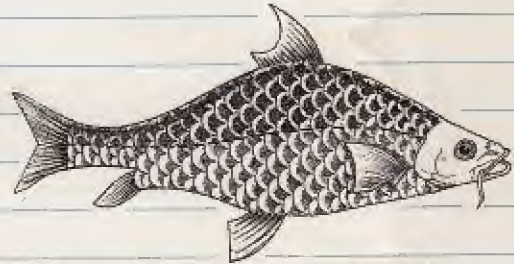
"Oh, come on!" Manjula pleaded. "So far we've seen tiger footprints, droppings and marks on trees he's passed. But where is he?"

"Patience, child," her father said. "This isn't a zoo where you stroll and see animals where you expect to find them."

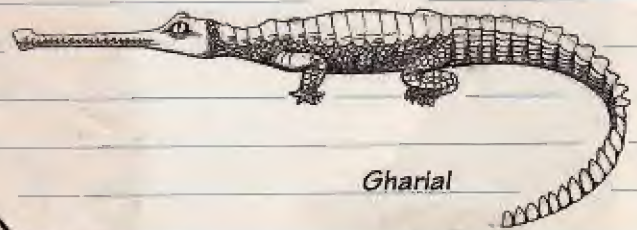
Their father told Manjula and Manoj that:



Dhikala and Bijrani are the more promising places in Corbett to sight tigers. Besides the important Ramganga river flowing through the park, the lake draws water birds to it. Apart from them, sporting fish like the mahseer and malee, and crocodiles such as the long-snouted gharial live here.



Mahseer



Gharial



Corbett National Park is open from November 15 to June 15. The ideal month to visit is March, when it is neither too cold nor too warm. In summer plenty of thirsty animals and birds come out to drink and dip at watering holes.

In the monsoon season, from June to October, the park closes to tourists. The roads flood with heavy downpours and wildlife moves to the hills for coolness.



The sun was high in the sky. It had been four hours since they set off at sunrise.

"Time we got back," suggested Harpal Singh.

"You mean, we're giving up the chase?" Manjula asked in her most disappointed voice.

"Never mind, there's always the afternoon safari to look forward to," her mother reassured. "Besides, the real pleasure is to just be in a place where forest tigers roam. Think about it — we're breathing the same air as he does, hearing the same sounds... It's great!"

Manjula remembered reading in their wildlife guide book that:



Nowhere else in the world
can a person travel to such different
places in the same country.
Within India itself you are
able to move from snow
leopard country (Ladakh)



to a hot desert (Thar),

to tropical grasslands (Terai),



to deciduous jungle (Bandhavgarh),



to mangrove swamps (Sunderbans),



to a rain forest (Silent Valley).



"All right," Manjula consoled herself. That was true — there was the safari after lunch. And there was still tomorrow. Who knew?

Would it be the tiger ... or some more birds ... maybe a baby crocodile or two stretched lazily in the mid-day sun?

"It could well be Mister Tiger himself," Manjula suddenly said loudly to herself. "And if I do get to meet him this evening, I'm sure to dream about him all night long ... what a beautiful animal ..."

Her eyes narrowing wistfully, she turned with a grateful look towards her parents. How wonderful for them to have chosen such a holiday spot for Manoj and her to explore! A place as green and peaceful, a haven for so many gorgeous living creatures.

It's a wonderful world, she sighed contentedly.



Here's good news for Indian wildlife lovers!

*Though forests are being destroyed,
there also continue to be plenty of people in our country
who care for the earth enough to fight for it.*

*Conservation is a new trend in India,
but with the right ideas — coming from children like you —
it can become a movement full of hopes and plans for the future.*

*So let's join hands to create a better world!
For you and for me. And for all the beautiful birds and animals
we were always meant to share it with.*

NORTH ZONE

BANDHAVGARH NATIONAL PARK, Madhya Pradesh

Set amidst the Vindhya mountains, this park boasts one of the highest tiger population densities in the country. Other species as easily spotted here are the great gaur (Indian bison), the sambar, barking deer and nilgai, the leopard, hyena, jackal and bangal fox. Besides, Bandhavgarh has 250 species of birds as well as reptilian fauna like cobra, krait, viper, python, turtle and a variety of lizards.

DACHIGAM WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, Kashmir

The habitat of the endangered hangul or Kashmir stag-- the only species of red deer found in India-- this sanctuary is surrounded by silver birch and conifer forests. Located close to Srinagar, the scenic valley with a meandering river that marks Dachigam also contains black and brown bears, musk deer, wild goats like the markhor and ibex, and exotic Himalayan birds.

VAN VIHAR RAMSAGAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, Rajasthan

Van Vihar and Ramsagar are in fact like two separate wildlife sanctuaries, though both are in the same area near Dholpur. On the Vindhyan plateau, Van Vihar is inhabited by the blue bull, wild boar, sloth bear, leopard, hyena, sambar and chital. Ramsagar, with a picturesque lake, supports rich aquatic life including fresh water crocodiles and water birds such as the ibis, cormorant, darter, river tern, ringed plover, sandpiper, heron (grey and purple) and water hen. Plenty of migratory ducks and geese visit the lake in winter.

DUDWA TIGER RESERVE, Uttar Pradesh

This tiger reserve in Lakhimpur-Kheri district is among the finest remaining examples of the diverse and productive terai eco-system. Its northern edge lies along the Indo-Nepal border and the southern boundary touches the Suheli river. Apart from the tiger, you will find that the Dudwa grasslands form the stamping ground of other endangered species like the leopard, barasingha (swamp deer) and hispid hare.

GREAT HIMALAYAN NATIONAL PARK, Himachal Pradesh

The largest protected area in all of Himachal Pradesh state, this park is carved out of the breathtaking mountainous terrain of Kullu district. Its rich coniferous forests, alpine flower-carpeted meadows, snow-capped peaks and glaciers provide a splendid panorama and harbour a variety of animals-- wild mountain goats such as the bharal, goral and serow, the brown bear and predators like the rare snow leopard. Colourful pheasants and other Himalayan birds make up the teeming avian life here.

GULMARG BIOSHERE RESERVE, Kashmir

Just 48 kms from Srinagar, the Gulmarg Biosphere Reserve has an altitudinal range of about 2,400-4,300 meters above sea level. Among its fauna are the Himalayan musk deer, red fox, brown and black bears, and some interesting avifauna which includes upland birds, both resident and migratory.

HEMIS HIGH ALTITUDE NATIONAL PARK, Kashmir

Named after the famous Hemis monastery, this park is approachable by road from Leh. Most of its mammal species are rather rare-- the shapu, bharal, great Tibetan sheep, ibex and snow leopard. The Himalayan snow cock is a good example of fauna not seen at lower altitudes.

KANHA NATIONAL PARK, Madhya Pradesh

Remember Jungle Book? Well, this is the place Kipling's charming children's story unravelled... described in delightful detail with its thick sal trees, long bamboos, tall swaying grass and winding rivers. In the Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh, Kanha national park is a tiger reserve, but was originally proposed as a sanctuary to protect a unique type of chinkara. Many threatened species have indeed been saved here, including the high ground barasingha.

KEIBUL LAM JAO NATIONAL PARK, Himachal Pradesh

This unusual wilderness homes the sangai, or Manipur brow-antlered deer, noted for its curved antlers. An exceptionally graceful animal, it lives on the floating vegetation of Logtak lake 32 kms south of Imphal. Keibul Lam Jao was declared a sanctuary in 1954 when numbers of the highly localised sangai became dangerously depleted.

KEOLADEO (BHARATPUR) SANCTUARY, Rajasthan

No less than 328 kinds of birds have been sighted at the Bharatpur sanctuary, 117 of which migrate from as far as Siberia and China. The credit of converting this area near the city of Bharatpur into a world renowned wildfowl reserve goes to Prince Bhamji of Morvi state in Gujarat. Its complex eco-system of shallow fresh water swamps, dry savanna grasslands and woodlands supports an abundance of incredible instances of wildlife among strikingly scenic surroundings.

NAMDAPHA NATIONAL PARK, Arunachal Pradesh

Tucked away near Margherita town in the northernmost state of Arunachal Pradesh, Namdapha park has some typical inhabitants: the majestic gaur or mithun, Himalayan black bear, elephant, musk deer, slow loris, binturong, red panda and wild goat peculiar to the Patkoi range. This is also a reserve under Project Tiger, besides which predator there roams the rare slow leopard and clouded leopard. Primates such as the Assamese macaque, pig-tailed macaque, stump-tailed macaque and the distinctive Hoolock gibbon reside too, as do birds like the hornbill, jungle fowl and different pheasants.

OVERA-ARU BIOSPHERE RESERVE, Kashmir

Located a short distance from Srinagar near Pahalgam, the Overu-Aru reserve contains several species of birds as well as fauna-- the musk deer, brown bear and leopard to name but a few. Its altitudinal range varies from 3,000 to 5,425 meters above sea level.

SARISKA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, Rajasthan

With a reasonable population of the sambar, chital, nilgai, four-horned antelope, wild boar and common langur as well as the tiger, caracal, jungle cat and porcupine, Sariska is a tiger reserve just 40 kms from Alwar and a little over twice this distance from Jaipur. Its bird residents include the partridge (grey and black), peacock, red spur fowl, sand grouse, kite, eagle and vulture. A series of water spots created in the sanctuary act as its nerve centres.

SURINSAR MANSAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, Jammu

The Surinsar Mansar wildlife sanctuary is near Jammu and supports a mammal population of about 8 species and upto 15 species of birds. It is named after two lakes at its corners and comprises an area of 98 sq kms.

SOUTH ZONE

BANDIPUR AND NAGARHOLE NATIONAL PARKS, Mysore

With its open grassy woodland Bandipur lies south of the Kabini river, while Nagarhole to the north has taller and denser forests. Lying in the shadow of the Western Ghats, Bandipur is a tiger reserve and one of the finest habitats of the Asian elephant. At Nagarhole too there are excellent facilities for viewing large groups of the gaur, elephant, sambar, chital, and even the occasional tiger or leopard, besides other mammals like the tiny mouse deer, wild boar, pangolin, giant squirrel, slender loris, langurs and macaques. The park also has around 250 species of birds.

MUDUMALAI SANCTUARY, Tamil Nadu

Mudumalai (ancient hills), very near Gudalur, is considered a particularly scenic wildlife reserve as it is clothed in dense mixed and moist deciduous forests. The river Moyar, separating Mudumalai from Bandipur, runs through this park. The wild elephant, gaur, deer and primates such as the bonnet macaque and various langurs inhabit Mudumalai along with predators like the tiger, leopard and dhole (Asiatic wild dog) hunting in packs. In the cool of the teak and bamboo thickets rest colourful birds-- the hornbill, myna, barbet, parakeet and great black woodpecker with its dramatic red crest. Of course, the tiny eared owl, scops owl and little scops owl are all more heard than seen here.

NAGARJUNASAGAR-SRISAILAM SANCTUARY, Andhra Pradesh

The largest of India's tiger reserves with rugged gorges slicing through the Mallamalai hills, this sanctuary adjoins the reservoir of the Nagarjunasagar dam on the river Krishna. Its dry deciduous forests with scrub and bamboo provide shelter to animals ranging from the tiger and leopard at the top of the food chain, to the deer, sloth bear, hyena, jungle cat, palm civet, bonnet macaque and pangolin. The tiger is truly nocturnal and rarely seen in the unspoilt jungle.

PERIYAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, Kerala

Most famous for its large elephant population which can be easily sighted as you travel by boat on the lake here, Periyar also offers glimpses of the gaur, Indian wild dog, Nilgiri langur, otter, tortoise and a rich birdlife including the hornbill, kingfisher and even perhaps the fishing owl. This is one of the most well known sanctuaries in the south, extremely popular also with visitors from abroad.

EAST ZONE

BETLA NATIONAL PARK, Bihar

Endowed with thick tropical forests in which roams a variety of fauna, Betla near Ranchi (Betla actually refers to the core area of the Palamu sanctuary which shot to fame as early as 1932 for its tiger census-- the first of its kind worldwide) is another great attraction to tourists. Large herds of gaur and chital are seen here, as are the tiger, panther, sloth bear, wild boar, sambar, nilgai, and mouse deer.

JALDAPARA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, West Bengal

Jaldapara is 224 kms from Darjeeling via Siliguri and Jalpaiguri. The tropical forests extending from South-East Asia end around here, and if you don't go further east this is your chance to see the one-horned rhinoceros, elephant and other striking wildlife specimens. The area protects some 100 sq kms of lush forest and grasslands cut by the Torsa river.

KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK, Assam

This is the most famous place to see the one-horned Indian rhinoceros hunted almost to extinction for its value as big game and for the Chinese apothecary trade. Spotting the animal in the tall grass might prove difficult, though. Watch for egrets and other birds who use the rhino's armoured back as a perch and also listen for the "churring" sound of a large animal moving through rustling grass. The best viewing possibility may be by the jheels where they emerge to bathe.

LAOKHOWA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, Assam

Situated in the Nagaon district only 15 kms from the town going by the same name, this sanctuary is spread over an area of 60 sq kms. Among the wildlife species it harbours is the great Indian one-horned rhinoceros, wild buffalo, swamp deer, duck and cormorant.

MANAS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, Assam

Formed from the watershed of the Manas, Hakua and Beki rivers, this lovely area borders Bhutan. The only tiger reserve in Assam, its grassland is home too to the panther, clouded leopard, marbled cat, wild buffalo, elephant, sambar, swamp deer, dhole, binturong, otter, bison and-- on Bhutan's side of the Manas river-- the rare and beautiful golden langur. A very special biosphere, Manas holds 20 species of highly endangered birds and animals including the red panda occasionally in the higher elevation. The other exclusive species here is the pygmy hog.

NANDANKANAN SANCTUARY, Orissa

A combination of a beautiful botanical garden, a zoo and a sanctuary, Nandankanan-- the "garden of pleasure"-- is 20 kms from Bhubaneswar. Its zoo is known worldwide for white tigers who are kept company by lions, leopards, bears, smaller mammals and reptiles. It has the first gharial breeding centre as well. A recently introduced lion safari has become extremely popular with tourists flocking here.

PABHA OR MILROY SANCTUARY, Assam

Covering an area of 49 sq kms and located in the Lakhimpur district, Pabha wildlife sanctuary has been created solely for the protection of the magnificent wild water buffalo found within its limits.

PALAMAU TIGER RESERVE, Bihar

Lying along the northern edge of the Chhota Nagpur plateau at Daltonganj, the Palamau tiger reserve boasts predators like the tiger and leopard, the elephant, gaur, sambar, muntjac and nilgai. The Indian wolf has also been spotted here. Though the Keel river and its tributaries cut through this park, its animals are mostly dependent on man-made water holes-- which makes viewing them quite easy.

SIMLIPAL TIGER RESERVE, Orissa

In the centre of Mayurbhanj district, Simlipal is one more of the 18 tiger reserves in the country. A vast and awesomely beautiful area protecting India's largest sal forest region, this scenic paradise has sparkling waterfalls, interesting tribal settlements and mountain peaks. Its wildlife is represented by the tiger, leopard, elephant, sambar, chital, muntjac and chevrotain. The park is also a treasure house of 501 flora species belonging to 102 plant families (82 kinds of orchids alone have been identified).

SONAI RUPAI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, Assam

Home to the elephant, Indian bison, deer and a variety of hill birds, this sanctuary is situated in the Sonitpur district. Extending along the Himalayan foothills its 175 sq kms area offers magnificent views of both scenic beauty and wildlife.

SUNDERBAN NATIONAL PARK, West Bengal

The famous Gangetic deltas towards the south of Calcutta provide an ideal environment for Sundari trees to flourish. An area of 1330 sq kms here, sheltering many exquisite animals and birds, has been declared a national park. The tiger in the Sunderbans (seen at such watering holes as Sajnekhali, Sudhanyakhali, Netidhopani and Haldi) has been known to swim a record distance of 10 kms. Other attractions include estuarine crocodiles, the shy jungle cat or fishing cat, and forest reptiles like the king cobra, rock python and water monitor. Winters see the extremely rare Olive Ridley turtles come to nest on the shores of Kanak island.

WEST ZONE

GIR NATIONAL PARK FOREST, Gujarat

Said to be the last refuge of the Asiatic lion on earth, the Gir national park 59 kms from Junagadh district offers visitors fascinating views of flora and fauna as they make their way through the sanctuary. It has, since its establishment in 1965, quite successfully protected the lion and its habitat. Other than lions the lush greenery shelters the chinkara, wild boar, striped hyena, jackal, common langur, porcupine, hare and black buck. Over 200 bird species you can hope to spot include the peafowl, grey partridge, Boneli's eagle, crested serpent eagle, jungle bush quail, painted sand grouse, green pigeon and several types of dove.

KRISHNAGIRI UPAVAN NATIONAL PARK, Maharashtra

Formerly known as Borivli National Park and now also called Sanjay Gandhi Park, this important scenic area close to Mumbai has plenty of flora and fauna to explore. Among the smaller varieties of wildlife to be seen here are some superb waterbirds. Children especially enjoy the lion and tiger safaris organised, as well as the deer park.

LITTLE RANN OF KUTCH WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, Gujarat

This is a sanctuary designated for the protection of the desert region of north-west Gujarat, particularly the outer rim and a narrow belt of adjacent land. Surviving desert life examples include the khur (Indian wild ass), wolf and caracal. Access to the Little Rann of Kutch Sanctuary can be arranged at Bhuj.

TADOBA NATIONAL PARK, Maharashtra

Featuring mixed teak forests and a lake with night viewing available to do justice to the large wildlife population it teems with, Tadoba park lies 45 kms from Chandrapur (south-west from Kanha National Park). Its prominent animals include the tiger, leopard, gaur, nilgai, sambar and chital.

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